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INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELEPSYCHOLOGY

This Informed Consent for Telepsychology contains pertinent information regarding our psychotherapy over the phone or internet. Please read this carefully, and let me know if you have any questions. This signed document will represent an agreement between us.

Benefits and Risks of Telepsychology

Telepsychology refers to the provision of psychotherapy services remotely using technologies such as video conferencing or telephone. One of the benefits of telepsychology is that we can work together without being in the same physical location. This can be a helpful way of ensuring continuity of care in cases where either one of us moves to a different location, takes an extended vacation, or is otherwise unable to continue meeting in person. It can be more convenient and take less time. However, telepsychology requires technical competence on both our parts to be helpful. Although there are benefits of telepsychology, there are some differences from meeting in person, as well as some risks. For example:

- Risks to confidentiality. Because telepsychology sessions take place outside the regular office, there is potential for others to overhear sessions if you are not in a private place during our session. On my end I will take reasonable steps to ensure your privacy. But it is important that you find a private place for our session where you will not be interrupted. It is also important for you to protect the privacy of our session on your cell phone or other device. You should only participate in therapy while in a room or area where others are not present and cannot hear our conversation.
- Issues related to technology. There are several ways that technology issues may impact telepsychology. For instance, technology might stop working during a session, other people might be able to get access to our private conversation, or stored data could be accessed by unauthorized people or companies.
- Crisis management and intervention. Usually, I do not engage in telepsychology with clients who are in a crisis situation requiring more intensive support and intervention. Before starting telepsychology, we will develop an emergency response plan to address possible crises that could arise during the course of our telepsychology work.
- Efficacy. Most research indicates that telepsychology is about as effective as in-person psychotherapy. However, some therapists believe that nuances may be missed when not in the same room with a client. For example, there is debate about a therapist's ability to fully interpret a client's non-verbal cues when working remotely.

Electronic Communications

Together, we will decide which type of telepsychology service to use. You may need certain computer or cell phone systems to use telepsychology services. You are solely responsible for any cost to you incurred by necessary equipment, accessories, or software needed to take part in telepsychology.

For communication between sessions, with your permission, I use email or text messaging, but only for administrative matters. This includes things like scheduling and changing appointments and billing issues. You should be aware that I cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any information communicated by email or text. Therefore, I will not discuss any clinical information

by email or text and ask that you do not either. Also, I do not regularly check my email or texts, nor do I respond immediately, so these methods **should not** be used if there is an emergency.

Treatment is most effective when clinical discussions occur at our regularly scheduled appointments. However, if an urgent issue arises, you should feel free to reach me by phone. I will do my best to return your call within 24 hours, with the exception of weekends and holidays. If you are unable to reach me and need immediate help, contact your family physician or closest emergency room and ask for the psychologist or psychiatrist on call. If I am not available for an extended period of time, I will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact in my absence if necessary.

Confidentiality

It is my legal and ethical responsibility to make my best efforts to protect all communications that are part of telepsychology. However, given the nature of electronic communication technologies, I cannot guarantee that our communications will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to our communications. I will try to use updated encryption methods, firewalls, and back up systems to keep your information private, but there is always a risk that our electronic communications may be compromised, unsecured, or accessed by others. You should also take reasonable steps to ensure the security of our communications (for example, only use secure networks for telepsychology sessions and have passwords to protect whatever device you use for telepsychology).

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that I outlined in my “Information for Clients” document still apply in telepsychology. Please let me know if you have any questions about exceptions to confidentiality.

Appropriateness of Telepsychology

From time to time, we may schedule in-person sessions to “check in” with one another. We will determine whether telepsychology is still the most appropriate form of therapy. We will discuss options of engaging in in-person counseling or referrals to another professional in your location who can provide appropriate services, should that make the most sense.

Emergencies and Technology

Assessing and evaluating threats and other emergencies can be more difficult when engaging in telepsychology as opposed to in-person therapy. In light of this, we will create an emergency plan before beginning telepsychology services. I will ask you to identify an emergency contact person who is near you and who I will contact in the event of the need to assist you in crisis. This authorization is part of our “Information for Clients” agreement.

If our session is interrupted for any reason, such as our connection fails, and you are having an emergency, do not call me back; instead, call 911, or go to your local emergency room. Call me back after you have called or obtained emergency services.

If the session is interrupted and you are not having an emergency, disconnect from the session and I will wait 2 minutes and then re-contact you via whatever telepsychology platform we have been conducting therapy. If you do not receive a call back within 2 minutes, then call me at (603) 289-8838.

If there is a technological failure and we are unable to resume our connection for some reason, you will only be charged the prorated amount of actual session time.

Fees

The same fee rates for in-person therapy apply to telepsychology. However, insurance or other managed care providers may not cover telepsychology sessions. As with in-person therapy, if your insurance does not cover these sessions, you are solely responsible for the entire fee of the session. Please contact your insurance company prior to our engaging in telepsychology sessions to determine whether these sessions will be covered.

Records

The telepsychology sessions shall not be recorded in any way unless agreed to in writing by mutual consent. I will maintain a record of our session in the same way I maintain records of in-person sessions in accordance with my policies.

Informed Consent

This agreement is intended as a supplement to the general informed consent outlined in our “Information for Clients” agreement and does not amend any terms of that agreement. Your signature below indicates agreement with its terms and conditions.

Covid-19 Addendum

The current pandemic situation creates a fluid, somewhat unpredictable, and at times confusing environment for us all. In light of this, we will do our best to weigh the risks of and benefits of telepsychology with risks and benefits of meeting in person to make a decision that best fits our needs at the time. For example, you may decide that, even though you would typically rather meet in person, the risk of contracting the virus, though minimal, is greater in my office. We may then decide that meeting virtually makes more sense at that point. This may change from week to week, month to month. I will do my best to address these options with you as often as needed, and I ask that you raise any concerns you may have as they emerge.

Signature of client Date

Signature of therapist Date